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STATINT

Successor At CIA

By naming John A. McCone to succeed Allen W. Dulles, the President has made it plain that he prefers to see the Central Intelligence Agency, which counts a general and an admiral among its previous directors, under continued control by a civilian. Mr. Kennedy has also named a Republican to succeed a Republican and like his predecessor a man with a record of successful service under a Democratic Administration.

So far, so good; what the public evaluation of CIA's new head as an individual should be, is less clear. Partly this follows Mr. McCone's willingness, during more than a decade in Washington, to stay out of the spotlights. His background is that of the engineer and industrialist who has demonstrated an ability for administration. His record at the Atomic Energy Commission shows he can run an organization, and as far as knowledge of nuclear progress is part of the intelligence mission—and the nuclear capabilities of other nations are indeed of prime interest these days—Mr. McCone's background will stand him in good stead. There is nothing to indicate, on the other hand, that he has special insight in or talent for international affairs, particularly those aspects of international affairs, as now assigned to CIA, which have to do with the overt and covert gathering of information and with the conduct of certain operations outside the United States involving stealth or even violence.

Given the classified nature of CIA, it is altogether possible that the public never will be really able to judge Mr. McCone's performance. Mr. Dulles's performance, after ten years with CIA, is hotly and fruitlessly debated. If at some point CIA's assignment is redrawn to emphasize intelligence information, with operations transferred to some other agency, perhaps to the military, it might yet prove possible to have a clearer idea as to the virtues and defects of a CIA director.

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